



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good morning,

The Thanksgiving Holiday is approaching and I can't think of a better time to thank everyone for the valued support you have given our agency during the past year.

As we work to develop and implement initiatives that will attract visitors to all areas of our amazing state, our priority, as always, is to ensure that we are partnering with and meeting the needs of communities throughout the Grand Canyon State.

Speaking of working more closely with Arizona communities; I am pleased to announce we have realigned our internal resources at AOT in an effort to further support our commitment to community outreach and development.

Laura Franco French, our Executive Projects Manager will assume the role of Director of the Communications & Community Development (CCD) division. Laura has been an integral member of our agency for the last three years focusing her efforts on AOT's legislative and international activities such as the Travel Leadership Summit, Arizona Mexico Commission and the Border Governor's Conference.

Laura's leadership to the CCD team will complement the members of this essential division. In this new role, she will further develop a program of work that will reinforce the division's offerings, which focus on community outreach efforts. Laura will also work to bring awareness of these vital programs to key decision makers throughout the state as she continues her role as legislature liaison. This change will be a benefit to AOT as well as our valued partners around the state.

Have a great week as well as a Happy Thanksgiving! If you have friends or family visiting you this weekend, be sure to check out www.Arizonaguide.com for ideas on what to see and do throughout Arizona during the Holidays!

AOT News

AOT Representative Elected to NTA Board!

Congratulations to Jennifer Sutcliffe, AOT's Travel Industry Marketing Manager who has been elected by her peers to be the destination marketing organization (DMO) representative for the National Tour Association Board of Directors. This is a great honor for Jennifer and will put her in the position to represent all NTA members - tour operators, suppliers and DMOs. For more information about the NTA, visit www.ntaonline.com.

SAVE the DATE: ATU Workshop – “Grant Seeking and Grant Writing for Tourism-Related Projects”

As the results of a valuable partnership between the Arizona Department of Commerce, Arizona State Parks, and Arizona Office of Tourism, we are proud to present the next Arizona Tourism University complimentary workshop, “Grant Seeking and Grant Writing for Tourism-Related Projects.”

This informative session will uncover the best free and subscription-based grant funding directories for finding critically needed monies to fund your tourism-related projects, in part or full. The trainer, Dr. Bev Browning, author of *Grant Writing for Dummies* and *Perfect Phrases for Writing Grant Proposals*, will lead you through the skills of finding the perfect group of potential funders and show you how to write grant award winning narrative sections. Don't miss the best "how to" session of the year!

Following Dr. Browning's presentation, Eric Vondy from the State Historic Preservation Office, Vivia Strang also from the State Historic Preservation Office, Tom Doyle from the Arizona Department of Commerce, and Glenn Schlottman from the Arizona Office of Tourism will present information on Certified Local Governments, Historic Preservation, the Main Street and REDI Programs, and AOT grant programs. Each presenter will be available at the last part of the workshop to answer questions and discuss projects.

Be sure to sign up today! Contact Glenn Schlottman at 602-364-3727 or via e-mail at gschlottman@azot.gov.

“Grant Seeking and Grant Writing for Tourism-Related Projects” complimentary workshops will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the following locations:

December 9

[White Stallion Ranch](#)

9251 W. Twin Peaks Rd.
Tucson, Arizona 85743

December 11

[Lowell Observatory](#)

1400 West Mars Hill Road
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

December 15

[Arizona Museum of Natural History](#)

53 N MacDonald
Mesa, AZ 85201

For more information or to registrar, contact Glenn Schlottman at 602-364-3727 or via e-mail at gschlottman@azot.gov.

AOT Activities

AAA FAM Tour

Kristy Swanson, AOT's Travel Industry Marketing Specialist, escorted a familiarization tour titled "The AAA Family Adventure FAM." In attendance were eight AAA travel agents from Arizona, California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. This very well-received familiarization tour made stops in Chandler, Phoenix and Yuma. The group traveled around historical Chandler, bounced over to Jumpstreet (an indoor trampoline park) hiked over to Piestewa Peak and traveled west to Yuma to spend some time in the Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park. If you would like additional information, please contact Kristy Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via e-mail at kswanson@azot.gov.

Brochure Distribution Opportunities in Germany

Between January and March 2010, AOT's German representative will attend three leading consumer shows which are being coordinated by the Visit USA Germany committee. There are two five-day shows being held in Munich and Hamburg, and one nine-day show in Stuttgart. It is estimated that more than 375,000 consumers will attend the shows, making this an excellent opportunity to reach a very large target audience.

Brochure participation is normally \$250 per show, but all three shows are available for \$500 (plus shipping). Space is limited to five exhibitors on a first come first served basis! For more information, please contact Loretta Belonio at 602-364-3725 or via e-mail at lbelonio@azot.gov.

Upcoming Events & Activities

[International Media Golf Shootout](#)

Date: November 30 – December 6
Location: Greater Phoenix

[AZAP FAM Tour](#)

Date: December 1 – 6
Location: Phoenix, Chandler, Prescott, Scottsdale, Tucson, Page/Lake Powell, Lake Havasu City, Mesa, Tempe and Flagstaff

[Calgary Sales Blitz](#)

Dates: December 7

Location: Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Winnipeg Sales Mission

Date: December 7 – 9

Location: Winnipeg, Manitoba

Industry News

AAA Announces its 2010 Four- and Five-Diamond Valley restaurants

The 2010 AAA guide is out, and the year's four- and five-diamond winners are looking very, very familiar. Once again, Kai is Arizona's only five-diamond restaurant, one of 52 in the country.

The four-diamond line-up includes 18 in the Valley, down from 19 last year. Gone are La Hacienda at the Fairmont Scottsdale (closed), Mosaic (closed), Windows on the Green at the Phoenician (temporarily closed) and Alchemy in Fountain Hills (about to reopen under new ownership as an independent restaurant). New to the list are BLT Steak, J&G Steakhouse and Sassi, the only non-resort restaurant on the local list.

Michael Petrone, AAA's Director of Tourism Information Development, is the man who oversees the restaurant guide. He makes a point of noting that the guide is "not pitched to foodies," but aimed at "traveling members."

"Our members go to hotels," he said.

His team of 60-plus inspectors rates restaurants using a lengthy checklist, and food accounts for just 40 percent of the rating. Service is also worth 40 percent, while décor/ambience makes up the remaining 20 percent.

However, a guide that doesn't include Noca, Posh, Binkley's, Atlas Bistro, Vincent's, Christopher's, Quiessence, Cork, Pizzeria Bianco, Barrio Cafe and Rancho Pinot Grill among the Valley's best restaurants would seem to fall a bit short of comprehensive. Here is the full local list.

Five Diamond:

- Kai, Gila River Reservation

Four Diamond:

- Latilla (The Boulders), Phoenix
- Arizona Kitchen (Wigwam Resort - currently closed for dinner), Litchfield Park
- Red's Steakhouse (Wigwam Resort), Litchfield Park
- Elements (Sanctuary on Camelback), Paradise Valley
- Lon's (Hermosa Inn), Paradise Valley
- Different Pointe of View (Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs), Phoenix
- Ristorante Tuscany (Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa), Phoenix
- Wright's (Arizona Biltmore), Phoenix

- T. Cook's (Royal Palms Resort and Spa)
- Deseo (Westin Kierland Resort & Spa)
- Palm Court (Scottsdale Resort & Conference Center)
- Asia de Cuba (Mondrian Scottsdale)
- Il Terrazzo (Phoenician resort), Phoenix
- Bourbon Steak (Fairmont Scottsdale)
- Talavera (Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale)
- BLT Steak (Marriott Camelback Inn), Scottsdale
- J&G Steakhouse (Phoenician resort), Phoenix
- Sassi, Scottsdale

(Arizona Republic, Nov. 17)

Trend: Hotels Find Keeping Travelers At Home Can Be Good Business

"If you can't beat 'em, join 'em," may be the best maxim to explain why travel companies are getting into the virtual meeting business, actually helping clients avoid flying halfway around the globe says The New York Times.

Two of the world's biggest hotel companies, Starwood Hotels and Resorts and Marriott International, are outfitting some of their meeting rooms with telepresence suites, a high-end system that leapfrogs typical videoconferencing technology. Their goal is to rent the rooms to customers who are already embracing virtual alternatives to travel, but do not have telepresence suites everywhere they would like to use them.

"Major multinational companies have this technology in their corporate headquarters," said David Townshend, Marriott's senior vice president for sales. "But it's expensive, so they've looked to Marriott and some other providers to really extend their footprint into regional locations."

Telepresence technology has been around for several years, but analysts say the business model for public rooms, which rent for about \$500 an hour, is converging with tight travel budgets to create a more compelling reason for companies to give it a try. The technology itself has also improved, eliminating the delays that can make the typical videoconferencing experience awkward.

The telepresence suites are intended to make participants feel as if they are meeting face-to-face: when you walk into the room, there is half a conference table facing high-definition screens that project life-size images of people sitting in similar suites elsewhere in the world. To enhance the feeling of being in the same room, the other half of the table appears on screen, participants' eyes are at the same level and the walls are even painted the same color.

(Marketing & Tourism Trends Newsletter – Nov. 15)

Study: 'Tis The Season To Be Social -- And Mobile

If Santa's checking his list twice, he better make sure he's on Facebook. A new study reports that 17 percent of adult shoppers say they will use social media in some aspect of their holiday shopping, and 19 percent will rely on their mobile phones.

The survey -- part of Deloitte's 24th Annual Holiday Survey, a poll of more than 10,000 adults in the U.S -- says that of the nearly one in five who plans to use social media sites, 60 percent say they will do so to find sales, discounts, and coupons; 53 percent intend to use sites like MySpace and Facebook to research gift ideas, and 52 percent say they will check the wish lists of friends and family.

While young people certainly have greater amounts of social-media savvy than more grizzled consumers (52 percent of those in the 18-29 group will use social media to shop), interest is relatively strong among other age groups. In the 30 to 44 age bracket, 33 percent will use social media as a shopping tool, and in the 45 to 60 age group, 10 percent plan to do so.

Of the shoppers who plan to use their smartphones, 55 percent say they rely on their devices to look up store locations, 45 percent to research lowest prices, 40 percent to find general product information, 32 percent to get coupons, and 31 percent to find reviews. According to MarketingDaily this year, consumers are literally putting their money where their mouth is: A full 25 percent say they will also use their phone to make a digital purchase.

The Deloitte study also found strong interest in shopping online, with 22 percent of respondents vowing to shop primarily via the Web, and 44 percent planning to use coupons they find on the Internet. (*Marketing & Tourism Trends Newsletter – Nov. 15*)

Winter Travel Survey Suggests Cautious Optimism

While the tourism, hospitality and leisure sector continues to be challenged by current economic conditions, a new survey from Deloitte suggests reason for cautious optimism heading into the holiday and winter travel season. Deloitte's survey of 2,000 consumers in the U.S. revealed that almost half (45 percent) will take a vacation or leisure trip that involves staying overnight in a lodging facility, such as a hotel, motel or timeshare, from the beginning of Thanksgiving week through March of next year. When asked to compare their overnight travel plans for the same period a year ago, 45 percent of respondents said they will take the same amount of trips this year, while 25 percent said they will take more and 28 percent said they will take fewer trips. "Conditions appear to be stabilizing in the travel industry as signs of an economic recovery take hold," said Adam Weissenberg, U.S. Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure leader at Deloitte. (www.TravelPulse.com, *Travel Advance*, Nov. 18)

Survey: Consumers Ready to Resume Travels

A new nationwide survey from Deloitte LLP shows signs that the recession-battered travel sector may be stabilizing. Deloitte's survey of 2,000 U.S. consumers showed that 45 percent will take a vacation or leisure trip that involves an overnight stay during the period that runs from the beginning of Thanksgiving week through March of next year.

The survey also showed that:

- 18 percent will travel overnight and stay at a lodging facility during Thanksgiving week.
- 22 percent will travel overnight and stay at a lodging facility during December through New Year's Day
- 32 percent will travel overnight and stay at a lodging facility in the period running from after New Year's Day through March

When asked to compare overnight travel plans for the same time period a year ago, 45 percent of respondents said they will take the same amount of trips this year involving an overnight stay at a lodging facility, while 25 percent said they will take more and 28 percent said they will take fewer trips.

"Conditions appear to be stabilizing in the travel industry as signs of an economic recovery take hold," said Adam Weissenberg, the U.S. tourism, hospitality and leisure leader for Deloitte. "Room rates are still low, which is impacting revenue, but consumers are finding special offers and incentives on hotel accommodations which is helping to increase occupancy."

Deloitte is an international accounting and consulting firm with roughly 200 employees in the Phoenix area.

Survey results also suggest that some respondents may still have concerns about economic conditions, with 64 percent saying they are more cost-conscious when traveling.

"This season, spending likely won't return to levels that the industry enjoyed prior to the recession, but some segments of the population are showing more confidence in the economy," Weissenberg said.

The survey was commissioned by Deloitte and conducted via telephone interviews by Opinion Research Corp. between Oct. 22 and Nov. 2. The survey polled a sample of 2,000 consumers and has a margin of error for the entire sample of plus or minus two percentage points. (*Phoenix Business Journal*, Nov. 18)

Optimism Emerges on Industry's Economic Future

Despite a 5.5 percent drop in the world's tourism economy this year, due to the recession, the industry should grow by 4 percent a year over the next 10 years, says Meeting News. The projection was made by the World Travel & Tourism Council, London, in partnership with Oxford Economics. Last summer's financial meltdown shrunk the global economy "at the steepest rate" since the end of WW II. But there are signs of an upward revision as a result of record monetary stimuli, revived credit and increased value of assets. (www.MiMEgasite.com, 11/17)

Inbound numbers for international visitors fell in August, the Office of Travel and Tourism Industries disclosed. Some 5.4 million travelers came to the U.S. in August, off 4 percent from the same 2008 month with the eight month tally down 9 percent. August 2009 represented the 10th consecutive month of a decline in foreign visitor outlays. On the plus side, arrivals from Mexico, China and Hong Kong, Brazil and The Bahamas showed double-digit gains. (*Special to TA; Travel Advance*, Nov. 20)

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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